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## TO DANCE IS A SPORT

WE are already far from the time when the dance was considered play for children.

Today dancing captivates persons of all ages.

One of the chief causes of its present popularity is that we have the habit of considering it as a sport.

To dance is a sport and the most harmonious of all the sports. Does it not put in requisition all the muscles?

Does it not give us the opportunity to improve our natural or acquired grace? Have not the Russian ballets brought before our eyes a maximum of beauty and in part renovated our esthetic canons? I am well aware that there is a great difference between the postures of Nyïnski and the movements of some fashionable man trying the tango or the turkey trot. But to the attentive observer, the former—the art of the Russian—cannot entirely eclipse the latter—the occupation of the man of the world.

Yes, dancing is more than ever the fashion; we are returning to the period before the Revolution. At that time women of the best society got up or improvised dances wherever they happened to be, no matter where, during a walk at hap-hazard. A park with its lawn and its foliage served as a framework for the supple movements of the “Indifferent” and the “Divette.” Even the street. Have we not seen a certain grand dame of the court of King Louis XVI stop her coach in the middle of the Faubourg St. Antoine and join, keeping all her dignity the while, in the popular fête, so much did she enjoy the pleasures of the dance?

In all of Europe they danced after the manner of the French court. Our professors were called in consultation from the furthest parts of Russia or Spain.

The handsome Vestris had grace that

could not be equalled. Audiences with him were sought after like those of an ambassador. And Lord Chesterfield in 1750 wrote to his son who was finishing his education in Paris: “My son, the most important man in France at present is certainly your dancing master.”

We are not returning to those wonderful days, at least for the dancing masters: golden ages have only one period.

Nevertheless it is not a question of age now when one should give himself up to this diversion.

I remember that in my time, that is to say when I was twenty years old, that a man of thirty or forty years who showed himself at the Vestris of the period would have been considered as an eccentric, to say no more.

At the present time, following the example of English lords, men of mature age frequent the fashionable lessons and from five to seven o’clock at those thés dansants which are the height of fashion, the height of elegance, they are not the last to glide gracefully holding in their arms our pretty Parisiennes while the tsiganes are pounding away at or giving in detail the latest creation.

For—and this is most important to note—the new dances may very properly be danced in fashionable society. It is a prejudice which I cannot too strongly oppose on the part of him who would like to create the belief that properly behaved persons cannot dance the tango or any other dance of exotic name.

The rule is this: every dance is susceptible of a double interpretation; a vulgar interpretation, and then it flies to the cabarets of Montmartre or similar places, and a noble, harmonious interpretation conformable to the regulations of good society.